

Energy and Commerce Committee to Probe Breakdowns in NRC Oversight

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NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Energy and Commerce Committee to Probe Breakdowns in NRC Oversight

Washington, DC — Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, today announced they will conduct a comprehensive review of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) operations following reports of security guards sleeping on the job at the Exelon Peach Bottom nuclear power plant in York County, Pennsylvania.

"The NRC's stunning failure to act on credible allegations of sleeping security guards, coupled with its unwillingness to protect the whistleblower who uncovered the problem, raises troubling questions," said Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. "It appears that there has been a systematic failure, by both NRC officials and the nuclear plant licensee, to ensure that these high-risk facilities are secure and employees are not discouraged from expressing concerns about safety."

“The Committee would like to know whether it was the repeated notification from a concerned employee or the threat of a videotape showing security workers asleep on the job appearing on the evening news that prompted the licensee to look into this matter,” said Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. “In addition, the Committee wants to know why the NRC remains confident in this same contractor’s ability to secure other nuclear facilities throughout the country.”

Investigations by the NRC’s Inspector General (IG) have unveiled questionable decisions by the Commission with respect to nuclear power plant re-licensing. In addition, the IG has challenged the adequacy of NRC’s certification of fire protection materials, which NRC promised to test (during testimony before the Committee on Energy and Commerce in March 1993). Questions have also been raised by NRC staff about the adequacy of licensing decisions related to reprocessing facilities in South Carolina and the risk from a red oil explosion.

“The Administration has not complied with the requirements of the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness Act of 2002, which requires the stockpiling of potassium iodide pills in a 20 mile radius around nuclear power plants,” said Dingell. “The Committee will inquire whether objections by the White House and industry have led to foot-dragging by the NRC and the dangerous state of our nation’s nuclear power plants.”

“It is clear that the NRC requires increased oversight by this Committee,” said Stupak. “We will be seeking testimony from the NRC, the inspector general, the Government Accountability Office, scientists, and security force workers to assess what is broken and how best to fix it. We must ensure the NRC is responsive to allegations of security lapses, especially now that there are a number of new license applications for nuclear power plants flowing into the NRC. The American people need to know someone is looking out for their health and safety at new and existing nuclear power plants.”

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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